

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 157853
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LONDON NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL BELIZE NIACT IMMEDIATE

WHITE HOUSE NIACT IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 157853

NODIS

WHITE HOUSE FOR DR. BRZEZINSKI ONLY

FOLLOWING REPEAT GUATEMALA 4244 SENT ACTION SECSTATE 07 JUL 77

QUOTE S E C R E T GUATEMALA 4244

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: GT, BH UK PBOR

SUBJ: GUATEMALA-BELIZE EISPUTE

REF: STATE 157294

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT ON LEARNING OF BRITISH MOVEMENT OF
TROOPS INTO BELIZE BY VC-10'S , FEELS HE HAS NO CHOIC BUT TO
RINFORCE HIS FORCES IN PETEN WITH TWO ADDITIONAL INFANTRY
BATTALIONS. IN LIGHT OF OUR CONVERSATION, DURING WHICH I GAVE HIM
MESSAGE CONTAINED IN STATE 157294, HE WILL FOR THE MOMENT ISSUE
ONLY ANTICIPATTORY ALERT FOR THE LIFTING OF THESE TWO BATTALIONS

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AND DELAY EXECUTION ORDER WUNTIL HE HAS HEARD FURTHER FROM US.
HE HAS REITERATED TO ME THAT HE WILL NOT ATTACK BELIZE UNLESS
BRITISH PROCEED WITH UNILATERAL GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE. END
SUMMARY.

2. I CALLED ON ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER OBIOLS AT 9:30 AM TODAY
JULY 7 TO CONVEY ORAL MESSAGE CONTAINED IN REFTEL. I HAD

ONLY BEGUN WHEN WE WERE INTERRUPTED BY TELEPHONE CALL FROM PRESIDENT LAUGERUD TO OBIOLS TO DISCUSS REUTER REPORT THAT TWENTY BRITISH VC-10'S HAD BEGUN TO TRANSIT BERMUDA WITH TROOPS OFR BELIZE. ON LEARNING THA I WAS PRESENT WITH OBIOLS, PRESIDENT ASKED TO SPEAK TO ME AND DISUCSSED THIS RPORT WITH ME . HE REMINDED ME THAT, IN RESPONSE TO OUR REQUEST, HIS GOVERMENT HAD BEEN ACTING WITH GREAT RESTRAINT, NOTING THAT AMONG OTHER THINGS HE HAD ORDERED THAT HIS FORCES NEAR BELIZE BORDER SHOULD BE MAINTAINED AT DISTANCE OF TEN KILOMETERS FROM THE BORDER TO PREVENT ANY POSSIBILITY OF ACCIDENT. NEVERTHELESS, DESPITE ASSURANCES WE HAD GIVEN THEM ABOUT BRITISH, BRITISH WERE PROCEEDING IN HIGHLY PROVOCATIVE MANNER. HE SAID HE EXTIMATED THAT EACH VC-10 COULD CARRY 150 MEN AND THAT HE THEREFORE EXTIMATED THAT AS MANY AS 3,000 NEW TROOPS COULD BE ON THEIR WAY TO BELIZE. HE SAID HE HAD NO CHOICE IN THIS SITUATION BUT TO RIENFORCE HIS MEN IN THE PETEN. HE SAID AT THE PRESENT TIME HE HAD ONLY ONE REINFORCED INFANTRY BATTALION IN THE PETEN, COMPRISING A FORCE OF SOME 900 MEN. HE HAD NO CHOIC, THEREFORE, BUT TO MOVE IN TWO ADDITIONAL INFANTRY BATTALIONS. IT HAD BEEN THEIR EXPECTATION THAT AT THIS TIME THEY WOULD BE AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE DEALING WITH DECENT PEOPLE, BUT INSTEAD THE BRITISH HAD MOVED A FRIGATE ON TUESDAY AND NOW WERE BRINGING IN ADDITIONAL FORCES. HE GREGRETTEED THIS ACTION BUT FELT THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE HE COULD DO.

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3. I EXPLAINED TO THE PRESIDENT THAT I WAS IN THE PROCESS OF CONVEYING MESSAGE TO THE ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER AND I THOUGHT IT IMPORTANT, IN VIEW OF WHAT HE HAD TOLD ME, TO READ THIS MESSAGE DIRECTLY TO HIM. I SAID I THOUGHT THIS MESSAGES CONTAINED SOME REASSURING ELEMENTS WHICH I HOPED WOULD AFFECT HIS DECISION. I THEN READ HIM THE ORAL MESSAGE IN FULL.

4. THE PRESIDENT SAID HE APPRECIATED HAVING THIS INFORMATION. HE SAID HE WOULD GIVE ME HIS WORD OF HONOR THAT AS LONGIAS THERE WAS NO UNILATERAL DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, HE WOULD NOT ATTACK BELIZE. HE SAID HE HAD BEEN VERY CLEAR WITH ROWLANDS LAST YEAR ON THIS POINT. BUT HE SIAD WE WOULD HAVE TO UNDERSTAND HIS CURRENT SITUATION IN VIEW OF THE NEW BRITISH ACTIONS AND THAT AS SOON AS HIS ARMY LEADERS LEARNED OF THE MOVEMENT OF TROOPS, THEY WOULD BE JUMPING ON HIM. HE ASKED ME WHAT I THOUGHT HE COULD DO, EXCEPT TO MOVE THESE FORCES IN THE LIGHT OF THE BRITISH ACTIONS WHICH HE FOUND INSULTING.

5. I SAID I COULD ONLY EXPRESS TO HIM, AS SECRETARY VANCE

HAD EXPRESSED TO MOLINA YESTERDAY, THE HOPE THAT HE WOULD CONTINUE TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT IN SPITE OF THE BRITISH MOVES AND THAT I HOPED HE WOULD CONSIDER THE REASSURING ELEMENTS IN THE MESSAGE I HAD JUST GIVEN HIM. I SAID I WOULD, OF COURSE, REPORT TO THE SECRETARY IMMEDIATELY WHAT HE HAD TOLD ME. AFTER A MOMENT'S REFLECTION, THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE WOULD ONLY ISSUE ANTICIPATORY ALERT AT THIS MOMENT AND THAT HE WOULD DELAY THE FINAL EXECUTING ORDER FOR THE TROOP MOVEMENT UNTIL HE HAD A CHANCE TO HEAR BACK FROM ME. I TOLD THE PRESIDENT THAT, IF I HAD UNDERSTOOD HIM CORRECTLY, THAT IF HE WERE TO EVENTUALLY DECIDE THAT HE MUST MOVE HIS TROOPS, THEY WOULD BE MOVED ONLY TO REINFORCE THE EXISTING GARRISON IN THE PETEN AND WOULD NOT BE USED MILITARILY AGAINST BELIZE. HE SAID MY UNDERSTANDING WAS SECRET

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CORRECT AND REPEATED THAT HE HAD NO INTENTION OF ATTACKING EXCEPT IN THE EVENT OF A UNILATERAL GRANT OF INDEPENDENCE.

6. PRESIDENT

SAID THAT HE FULLY TRUSTED US AND SECRETARY VANCE, AND KNEW HE COULD TRUST THE MESSAGE I HAD CONVEYED TO HIM, BUT HE DID NOT TRUST THE BRITISH. HE SAID HE DID NOT WANT ARMED CONFLICT BUT COULD NOT BE INSULTED.

7 HE CONCLUDED BY ASKING ME TO EXPRESS TO THE SECRETARY HIS APPRECIATION FOR EVERYTHING WE WERE DOING TO ASSIST THE SITUATION AND TO TRY TO PREVENT AN ANGOLA IN LATIN AMERICA.

8. COMMENT: I AM NOT OPTIMISTIC THAT BRITISH CAN BE PERSUADED TO ALTER VERY PROMPTLY THEIR REINFORCEMENT MEASURES. NEVERTHELESS, THE PRESIDENT'S DELAY IN EFFECTING HIS OWN COUNTERACTION NOW GIVES BOTH SIDES A LITTLE TIME FOR REFLECTION AND THEREFORE IS WORTH HAVING. IN ALL LOGIC, THE PRESIDENT'S CATEGORIC ASSURANCE THAT HE WILL NOT ATTACK BELIZE EXCEPT IN THE EVENT OF UNILATERAL INDEPENDENCE SHOULD BE ENOUGH TO INDUCE THE BRITISH TO CONSIDER SOME DE-EXCALATION I WOULD APPRECIATE HAVING DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS SOONEST.

9. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH CONSIDER REPEATING THIS CABLE TO LONDON AND BELIZE.
BOSTER

UNQUOTE VANCE

SECRET

NNN

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